

# Ringling Around and About in the Huntingdon District



Issue No 10: October 2023



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## Ramsey

Venue for our practice meeting  
on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2023

## Editor's Comment - Phillip George

Ringling is going to change a lot in the next ten years. We need to steer that change so that it benefits individual ringers and towers, and the District as a whole. I have started to include in the newsletter some thoughts about how we might address this. I believe that it is something which we all need to consider. Part 2 of Towards 2030 talks about PR and recruitment. These are only my ideas; I hope that you will have others.

Next month I am going to consider 'Why We Ring'.

I wondered if anyone would be interested in discussing this whole subject? If so, I would be happy to arrange a forum for us to meet and share our ideas. Please contact me on [psg@nutbells.plus.com](mailto:psg@nutbells.plus.com)

During the year I have reported on many events within the District. They have included my visits to towers, District meetings, quarter peals and outings. In our own small groups, we often don't realise how many people are involved and how rich our culture of ringling is. I would like to continue to record our ringling but would really appreciate your help to keep the newsletter going, so there are invitations on **THE BACK PAGE**.

I find that **St Clements College Bob Minor** is not an often-rung method. Ringers seem to have difficulty in making thirds and back! It is excellent practice for making 3rds at the single in Plain Bob (other methods are available). I like to see it as St Simons Minor, but in fact that method has two hunt bells and six blows behind with a 4-5 dodge. Nothing like St Simons at all! St Clements offers a good intermediate stage of ringling building on dodging on the front with the familiar 5-6 up and down dodges, in that order. I can recommend it – you will find the blue line on **THE BACK PAGE**

## Meeting of the District Committee



Back: Phillip George, Ed Groome, Caroline Stevens, Geoff Byrne, Tom Pinnock, Catherina Griffiths  
Front: Daniel Sevens, Roger Beaman, Cass Boocock

Our autumn committee meeting was held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October. Ten members attended and apologies were received from Christian Burrell, Andrew Smith and Georgie Hunt.

All good intentions to speed through matters arising were slowed, due inevitably to some questions, but this was important to ensure that items are properly closed out.

Similarly with the various reports received, there were questions which required detailed discussion. Reports were received from the Membership Secretary (all subs have been paid), the District Bell Advisor (Alconbury bells have returned to the tower but there is still work to do before they will be available for general ringing), the Association General Committee (which is looking for someone to store the Association mobile bell), RATS (where each district reported on its ringing activities), and the Central Council report (which was included in the newsletter last month).

The main new item for debate was about our ringing programme for 2024.

We have been running the current format for several years and some of the things we do are not working very well; chiefly the first Saturday surprise practices. Attendance is low and we are not making progress. They also exclude learners and intermediate ringers. Indeed, we have changed some of them this year to make them more inclusive, but more needs to be done.

The survey taken in May has identified the wishes of ringers and with this in mind the committee will be proposing a new and exciting programme next year.

We will keep our traditional third Saturday practice meetings, but the first Saturdays will also include learner sessions, improver sessions and quarter peals. We will share this information as we head towards the Annual District Meeting (ADM) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2024.

Also in preparation for 2024, we reviewed the guidance document on the responsibilities of committee members. It is intended to help ringers if they are considering nomination as a District officer or member of the committee. This document will be distributed towards the end of the year.

All officers and committee members resign at the year-end and must be re-elected at the ADM. Any Huntingdon District Ringing Member of the Association is eligible to put their name forward with the names of their sponsors.



## Huntingdon Towers Quarter Peal Day *by Georgie Hunt*



L-R: Andrew Stevens, Jez Bottley, Georgie Hunt, Iain Hayden, Mel Farnham, Hannah Campbell

On Saturday 7th October, six ringers from Huntingdon, Godmanchester and the surrounding towers took part in a Quarter Peal outing to Bedfordshire. For an October day, the weather was rather unexpected – 23 degrees and sunny!

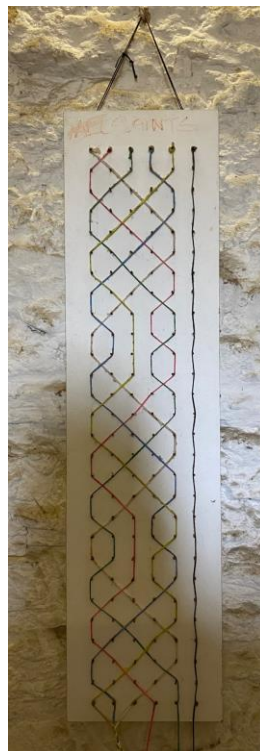
Throughout the day, we completed four quarters of Plain Bob Doubles to help members of the band become more confident ringing this method, and ringing for longer periods of time.

We first headed to Colmworth – congratulations to Mel Farnham who completed her first quarter peal inside! After Colmworth, we drove a short distance to Renhold where we rang our next quarter.

After a fantastic lunch (and a well-earned rest) at The Kings Arms in Cardington, we visited Willington for another quarter peal, which was rung in memory of John Haas. Our final quarter peal was rung just down the road at Cople, an anti-clockwise ring of six.

The quarter peal at Cople was my personal favourite of the day – although by this point we were all rather tired, all the efforts throughout the day had clearly helped my confidence ringing Plain Bob Doubles.

Thanks from the whole band to Iain Hayden for organising this fantastic opportunity and all his encouragement on the day, it was a really enjoyable day.



Some interesting things are seen on a ringing outing!

Photos by Jez Bottley: Mushrooms in Cople churchyard, All Saints Doubles pricked out in wool in Renhold ringing room, and the interior of the church, Willington church and the dovecote at Willington (16<sup>th</sup> century – now a National Trust property).



## Emergency Repair at Ramsey *by David Paynter*

A great service from Taylor's Bellfoundry.

In July 2019 it was noticed when investigating some odd clapping on the third bell (which turned out to be caused by the bell touching the frame) that part of a bolt had broken. There wasn't enough of the bolt left for a locknut, so a lot of thread locking compound was applied.

We got a price from Taylor's to replace the bolt and Maurice Thurmott generously donated money to cover it. Then covid came and nothing happened until this year.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September our steeple keeper, David Paynter, took the centre bolt (with clapper) to the foundry.

We had promised the use of the bells to the ringers from St Wendreda's church, March so that they could be part of the Wisbech quarter peal week, but had to warn them that the bolt was not due back until the day they had the ringing planned. (9<sup>th</sup> Oct).

However!!!! Just one week later, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October, it the clapper was returned with a shiny new bolt.

While it was away, David took the opportunity to repaint the steel the bolt passes through.

It was interesting that the thread locking compound which had been used yielded to a fairly modest spanner. He really thought it was going to be a nightmare to shift and had blowlamps and grinders ready to take up the challenge!

Footnote. - A quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles was successfully rung on October 9<sup>th</sup> with a young ringer, Eva Harwin, achieving her first quarter and on an inside bell!

### ***Still at Ramsey – here is a report on this month's District Meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> - PG***



We always receive a very warm welcome at Ramsey and this visit was no exception. Heavy rainfall and local flooding the previous day had caused some concern but thankfully all the roads were clear.

Cathy Moulton was our delegated Ringing Master and she kept us busy all afternoon with her usual jovial demeanour.

The included Plain Bob 6, Grandsire 5, Stedman 5, Kent TB, SOx, Cambridge and Norwich, after which we were treated to tea and cake before journeying home.

Before the ringing started we were invited to see the bells. It was a joy to see the original bell frame which is dated 1672. David keeps the belfry in tip-top order, which is an example to all of us steeple keepers.

Our thanks to Cathy and the local ringers for making us feel most welcome, and to David for indulging my interest in seeing the bells. The bells are by Robert Taylor 1810.



## Great Gransden Mini Outing and Bletsoe Tenor! *By PG*



Our second tower outing of the year was on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> of October when we visited three towers in north Bedfordshire. It's a 40 minute drive across pleasant countryside, so three towers and a pub lunch make for a very relaxing day.

We started at Bletsoe (6 bells 11cwt), which had been rehung in 2015. Tower Captain, Paul, greeted us, with the question "Did you bring our bell back?" Reply, "No I couldn't get it in the car." Laughter!!

In 1786 Bletsoe had their bells recast by Robert Taylor in St Neots. Gransden tenor was also in the foundry to be recast. It was found that the Bletsoe tenor was an exact match for the cracked Gransden bell, so the bells were swopped, and we ended up with Bletsoe's old bell!

We enjoyed our ringing at Bletsoe in a lovely modern ringing room with some nice bells, rattling off a course of Cambridge S Minor amongst other things. We have invited their ringers to visit us at Gt Gransden so that they can ring their bell! (Hope to report on this in due course)

We then went on the Riseley (6 bells 13 ¼ cwt), declared locally to be the best ring in the area, but we were not sure about that claim! Nevertheless, we enjoyed our visit and rang a very good 120 of Stedman Doubles.

Lunch was taken at The Fox & Hounds public house just down the road from the church, where we enjoyed the genial welcome and our pre-ordered meals. Some of us struck up a cordial "how do you do?" with a family group on the next table. Before desserts we asked the landlords if we could ring handbells for a few minutes – not to tunes but change ringing? They eagerly agreed. We asked the family group if they would mind, and they were delighted to be entertained. Sheila, Rebecca and I rang a 120 of Plain Bob Minor which was appreciated by all and received applause throughout the pub. A request from the family for the children to look at the bells was welcomed – it's all good PR.

Our last tower was Sharnbrooke (8 bells 9 ¾ cwt) where we were met by Patrick Alban and who helped us with Grandsire Triples on this pleasant ring.

The sun was still shining when we left the tower shortly after 3.00pm, saying our goodbyes as we made our way home. It was a really lovely day, good company and good ringing (inc Plain Hunt, Call Changes and Plain Bob Doubles). Thanks to everyone who came along and to the towers who made us very welcome.



Bletsoe



Riseley



Sharnbrooke

## Towards 2030 – No 2. Public Relations and Recruitment

Why is it so difficult to recruit ringers?

1. Anything to do with church puts people off.

Let's be honest, this can be a real problem. But people won't tell you this, they will just vote with their feet! So, in your PR and advertising material try not to talk about church. Ringing is a hobby, done with permission from the church but ringers don't have to have attend services or even have a Christian faith!

2. Make your publicity material exciting. Don't talk about keeping a 400 year old tradition going. We want ringers to be interest in what ringing is about today, not given the impression that it is old fashioned. Of course, there is history and tradition which is important but that will be discovered when they start ringing.

Consider using social media e.g. 'X' (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube. Use hashtags to index your posts because many people follow hashtags.

3. Make people want to learn! Talk about various aspects of ringing which present a challenge but are exciting. Make sure that they are aware of the commitment required but also cover topics such as teamwork, learning a new skill, going to the pub and socialising. As mentioned in Towards 2030 – No 1, make sure you have warm welcome and a clean and tidy ringing room.

4. Discuss your planned advertising material with others in your tower. Everyone has different ideas. What attracted them to ringing? Why do we ring?

5. Photographs. Include pictures of younger people (ensure permissions are sought and that safeguarding procedures are in place). Contrary to popular belief ringing is a young person's activity as well. I learned when I was 14. Show pictures of the bells, talk about 'heavy metal'.

6. Mention structured training and certificate scheme (if you have one) But it doesn't have to be A.R.T.

7. When talking to people about ringing – smile – be excited and enthusiastic. Talk about teamwork, bear in mind that ringing is excellent for mathematicians and people who do not like to take part in sport but love working in a group.

8. Arrange visits to the tower for people for them to see what ringing is about. When they are there give them a go at backstroke. Don't complicate things by trying to explain ringing to the nth degree. There will be time for that. But do answer their questions.

9. Try to think of ringing from a non-church goer/non ringer point of view. If you were not a ringer, what would put you off and what would you like to know which would attract you to the tower?

10. When they arrive in the tower put them at ease. Welcome them. Give them sweets. Make it easy for them to be relaxed in the environment. Help them always. Show commitment to them. Make them feel safe!

*This space left blank for your own ideas!!!!*

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## Ten-Bell Practice Meeting at St Neots - 7th October 2023

A warm October morning, twenty or so ringers and a magnificent peal of ten bells! That was the recipe for a couple of hours ringing when we met on Saturday 7th for our morning 10-bell experience at St Neots.

We started with call changes and later included Plain Hunt on 9, and Plain Bob caters. There were ringers of all abilities helping each other, standing behind and whispering advice over shoulders. Some had not rung on ten bells before, and others not for a long time.

Thanks to Andrew Smith, our ringing master, for catering for everyone, to Catherina for meeting us and Rev Paul Hutchinson (also ringing) for allowing us to use the bells.

The District did a creditable job this morning and we had a great time. It was good to see everyone.



## Half-Term Master Class

At Great Gransden we usually ring Plain Hunt, Plain Bob 5 and Grandsire 5. Josh is now moving on from call changes to ring the treble to Plain Hunt and the tenor behind. We wanted to give him the opportunity to consolidate these skills on a lighter ring of bells. To achieve this, we invited some ringing friends from other towers to join us at Little Eversden (Cambridge District) during half-term.

We met on Friday the 27<sup>th</sup> of October and after introducing Josh to everyone we had a spirited ring up in peal when he rang the 2<sup>nd</sup>. After that he rang the treble to a touch of Plain Bob Doubles, the first attempt at this, the 2<sup>nd</sup> to Plain Hunt on six, also a first attempt, and he rang the tenor behind to Plain Bob Doubles on two occasions, yet again first attempts. He also called some call changes.

We had a brilliant hour's ringing, and it was such a great opportunity for targeted training. Our grateful thanks go to the helpers who supported us in our master class.



L-R: Phillip, Elinor Cole, Josh Crutch, Becca Glazier, Tony Probert, Tom Ridgman, Sheila George, Dave Hawkins.



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## Newsletter Articles Wanted



### Who's Who??

During the year I have posted brief autobiographies of members of the District Committee. I thank everyone for taking the time to write them and hope that you have read them with interest.

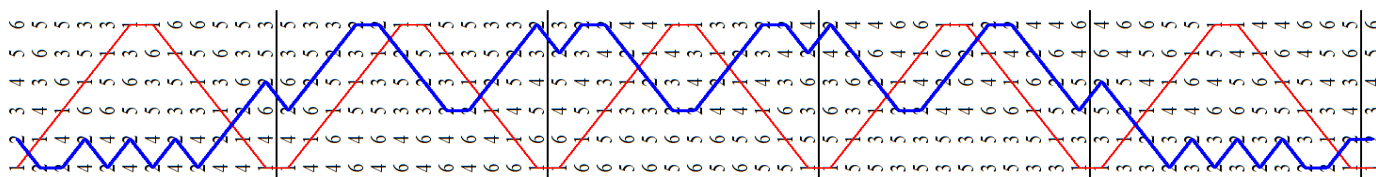
I was ringing with someone recently and they suggested that I have a Who's Who section in the newsletter. What a brilliant idea!

We all have interesting stories; it just takes a little effort to write them down. I am inviting you to write your story. It need only to be 200 – 300 words, or even less, or more. I can make room in the newsletter. Oh! and send a photograph please. You are part of our ringing community and play a key part in keeping ringing going.

Tell us where and when you learned to ring, and some of your key ringing moments. An outing, a quarter peal, a holiday. Are you a steeple-keeper, do you teach ringing? Did you learn elsewhere, have you rung with famous names? The subject matter is huge, and it's all very interesting.

I am sure that everyone will enjoy reading your stories and I am inviting you to spend 15 minutes jotting down your memories. Please send them to me at [psg@nutbells.plus.com](mailto:psg@nutbells.plus.com)

I would also like to see photographs of your towers. This can be pictures of the bells, or your team of ringers at practice nights. It could be about your tower outing (I know that Buckden had one recently!) You are probably tired of reading my prose. It is really good to read other people's work, so please feel free to share your news. Open your mind, use your imagination, take photos and send details to me. You could even become a regular contributor. Now that would be very welcome news! Thank you. PG



St Clements College Bob Minor

### Correction

In the September issue in the article about ringing at Croxton it was stated that the only digital record of any ringing was a peal of 7 Delight methods. In fact there is another piece of ringing which is recorded on BellBoard – a quarter peal in 2012 on the 26<sup>th</sup> June, conducted by our own Jez Bottley, for his daughter Corinne's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Quarter Peals in October

It has been another quiet month for quarter peals rung which include District ringers.

7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Woodston</b>	1320 St Augustine Bob Doubles
9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Ramsey</b>	1260 Plain Bob Doubles (First QP for Eva Harwin)
10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Little Gransden</b>	1260 Plain Bob Minor (Handbells)
22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Godmachester</b>	1260 Plain Bob triples
27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Hilton</b>	1320 Bourne S Minor

**"Coming Up Next"** see Caroline's leaflet and emails.

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November.** Surprise Minor practice at **Somersham** 10.00 – 12.00 midday

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November.** District Ringing Practice followed by **Business Meeting** at **Huntingdon All Sts**  
Ringing 14.30 – 16.00

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December.** Surprise Major Practice at **Gamlingay** 10.00 – 12.00 midday

**Everyone is welcome at our district ringing events – meet new ringers, experience different bells.**